

Message Text

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12
ACTION AF-08

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EO: 11652 NA
TAGS: ELAB, GH
SUB: LABOR LEADERS DEFEND UNION RIGHTS AND WAGE DEMANDS

1. THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GOG'S PRICES AND INCOMES
BOARD, MR. J.
TWENEBOA- KODUA, IN A RECENT SPEECH, OBSERVED THAT "PRESSURE
FOR WAGES AND SALARY INCREASES HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO FUELING THE

PROCESS OF INFLATION... AND PARADOXICALLY THESE WAGE AWARDS
HAVE QUICKLY BEEN OVERTAKEN BY THE INFLATIONARY SITUATION IT
ENGENDERED." THE BOARD, APPOINTED BY GOG HEAD OF STATE,
MUST APPROVE LABOR AGREEMENTS AND PRICE INCREASES OF MANY
GOODS AND SERVICES.

2. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE A FEW DAYS LATER, THE SECRETARY GENERAL
OF GHANA'S TRADES UNION CONGRESS, A.M. ISSIFU, STRONGLY
REBUKED THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ASSERTION. ACCORDING TO AN ACCRA
DAILY, THE TUC HEAD SAID: "THE GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS
IS DETERMINED TO OPPOSE WITH ITS FULL MIGHT ANY FORM OF
BUREAUCRATIC INTRIGUES AIMED AT DISCREDITING OR UNDERMINING
THE LEGALLY RECOGNIZED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING POWER OF ITS MEMBERS."
HE DESCRIBED AS "CHEAP ECONOMICS" THE CLAIM THAT WAGES
ENGENDERED THE INFLATION WITHOUT MENTIONING ESCALATING
PRICES, OVER WHICH THE BOARD HAS NO EFFECTIVE CONTROL.

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3. ON AUGUST 9 THE ACCRA PRESS CARRIED EXCERPTS FROM REMARKS OF ANOTHER PROMINENT UNION LEADER, THE HEAD OF THE MARITIME AND DOCKWORKERS, WHO DENIED THAT WORKERS' DEMANDS FOR BETTER WAGE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PRESENT SOARING PRICES. GHANA'S ANNUAL INFLATION RATE IS CURRENTLY AT LEAST 50 PERCENT.

4. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY'S LABOR REPORTING OFFICER SECRETARY GENERAL ISSIFU REVEALED THAT THE BOARD CHIEF HAS LONG BEEN SEEN AS AN OPPONENT OF LABOR. ISSIFU EXPLAINED HE COULD NOT LET TWENEBOA-KODUA'S PUBLIC REMARKS PASS WITHOUT COMMENT, AS THEY UNDERMINE LEGALLY RECOGNIZED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

5. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME UNION LEADERS HAVE SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY IN PUBLIC IN DEFENSE OF LABOR'S RIGHTS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WAGE DEMANDS AND INFLATION. ISSIFU ADMITS THAT IN SPITE OF RESISTANCE OF THE BOARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WAGE SETTLEMENTS HAVE GENERALLY BEEN APPROVED. HE BELIEVES THAT LABOR CAN CONTINUE TO WIN ITS JUSTIFIABLE DEMANDS. HE IS ADAMANT, THAT LABOR WILL NOT ACCEPT WAGE LIMITATIONS WITHOUT BASIC ECONOMIC REFORMS, SUCH AS EFFECTIVE IMPORT CONTROLS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURE.
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